

# PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT

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## WHAT

Platform development is a multistakeholder engagement process that provides mechanisms for enhancing communication and innovation capacities among mutually dependent actors through:

- \* Improved interactions through sharing experiences
- \* Coordination of knowledge, skills and resources contributing to economic gain
- \* Coherence towards improving productivity and access to established services

The processes can be established at various levels, ranging from local to sub-national & national levels with different objectives and functions. Interventions to support a Multi-stakeholder Processes [MSPs] also vary depending on the purpose influenced by both the initial context and the capacity of different actors involved. Typically local level MSPs are more action-oriented learning platforms while sub-national and national MSP play a strong role in the overall coordination, identification & addressing of institutional and policy constraints, as well as scaling up/ out of best practices and lessons learnt.

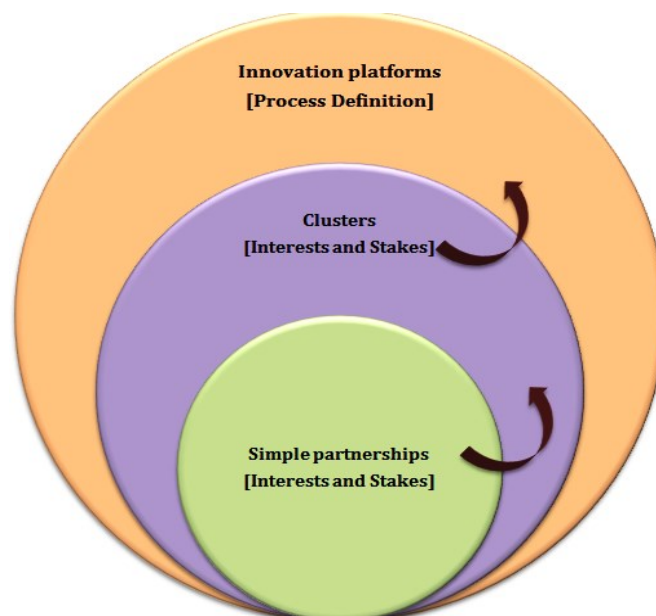
Within the SRI project, MSPs are structured into phases that support interventions. These phases are broadly categorized as; initial engagement with stakeholders, issue identification & planning, implementation, learning & assessment to a final phase that ensures continuity and sustainability within a dynamic enabling environment



### HOW

Within the SRI context, MSPs are described in three levels; simple partnerships, clusters and innovation platforms. These levels build-up through a clearly defined pathway that describes how to establish simple partnerships into clusters, growing clusters into innovation platforms and strengthening existing innovation platforms.

Figure 1 displays how partnerships are a subset of clusters which are subsets of innovation platforms hence the interconnection.



The three levels of MSP are distinguished based on four key principles which provide a guided criteria for evaluating existing linkages. Table 1 provides a description of each of these engagement levels.

Principles	Table 1: Engagement levels		
	Simple Partnerships	Cluster	Platforms
<b>Structure [Formality]</b>	- Simple - Unidimensional	- Multi-layered - Defined	- Open ended - Multi-dimensional - Institutional identity established
<b>Geographical focus</b>	- Specific locality of operation despite the sparsely located partners	- Boundary defined by the physical location of the issue	- Meso level/ scale - Trans-boundary
<b>Interests &amp; scope</b>	- Very specific - Clear and easily achieved in a short term	- Focused, but not holistic of all the factors pertinent to the issue - Risks tradeoff and competing interests at times	- Several aspirational goals that support a common vision - Achievable in a long term
<b>Linkages to external partners &amp; stakeholders</b>	- Limited	- Several partners engaged on a common goal - Collaborative partner expectations not always clearly articulated	- Multiple stakeholders at multiple levels

## WHY

Within the SRI context, MSPs have been identified as critical and structured approach to addressing complex challenges affecting multiple actors at a larger scale through a participatory process that ensures quality engagement.

From the SRI group development activities, a number of gaps identified in group work plan require strengthening supportive linkages and existing mechanisms. Much of these gaps are related to information sharing, market-ing opportunities, accessing financial institutions among others.

The SRI project therefore considered MSPs as best avenues for supporting:

- ◇ Knowledge sharing opportunities
- ◇ Building on innovative skills
- ◇ Addressing local level challenges by leveraging on partnering oppor-tunities
- ◇ Influencing policies through policy dialogue processes...

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## WHAT CONSTITUTES MSPs

MSPs entail social, organizational and technological components. Within the SRI description of these three components the focus is mainly on the following characteristics:

- ◇ The sets of interests that propagates formation of three levels of multi-stakeholder engagement; simple partnerships, cluster, and innovations platforms
- ◇ The power differentials within levels and how to ensure information sym-metry at the different levels
- ◇ The structure of MSPs [temporal and spatial formation/ evolution pro-cess]
- ◇ The viable approach towards sustainability of MSPs that takes account of the M&E plan

